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DECEMBER 2, 1952
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SIBERIA:
Russia's Secret Base For World Conquest

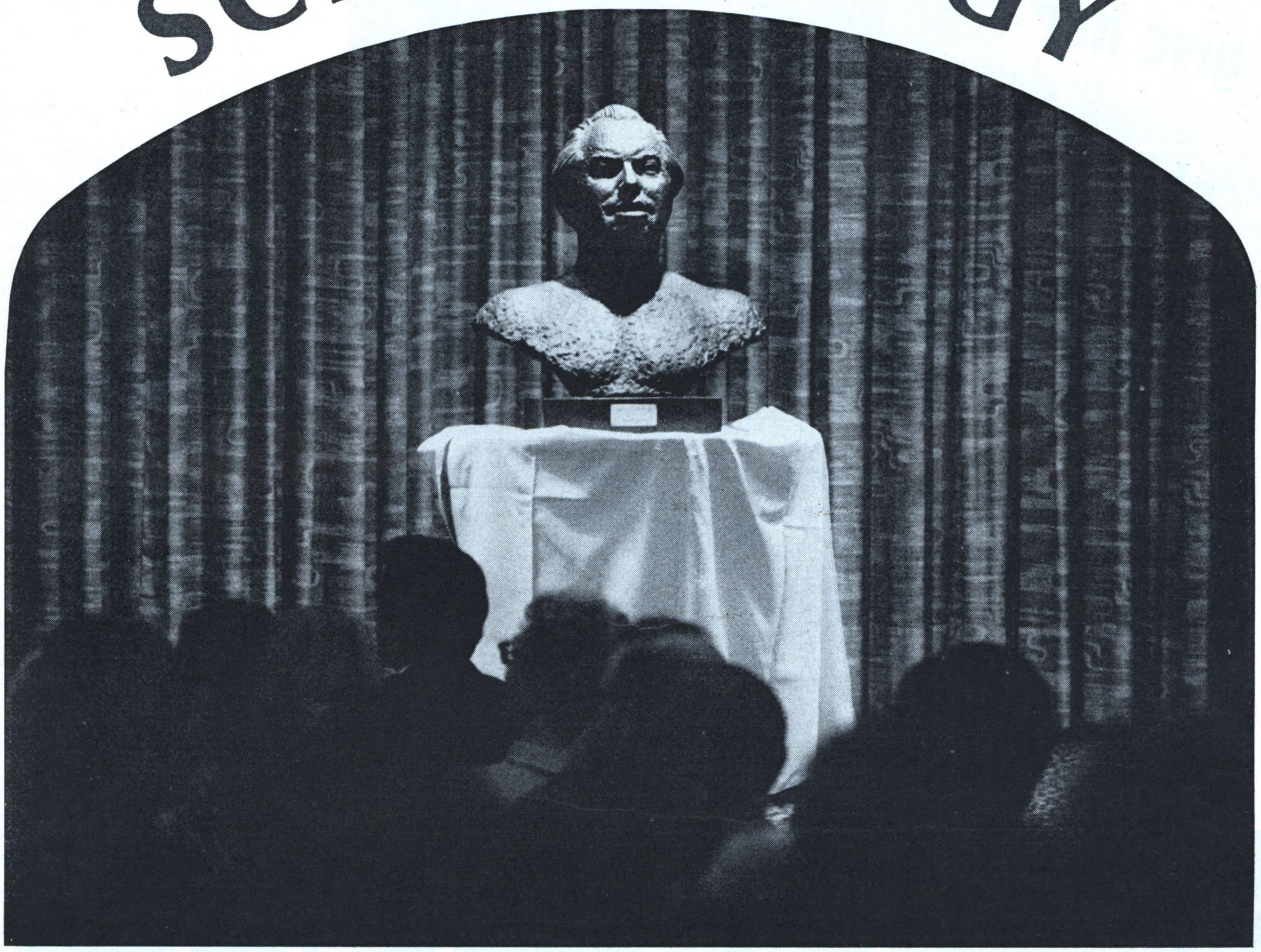
Dianetics: Science or Hoax?

Basketball Forecast

ESTHER WILLIAMS
See page 20

A growing cult reaches dangerously into the mind

SCIENTOLOGY



The lights in the hall go dim, leaving the bronzed bust of the Founder (spotlighted) at center stage. From the loudspeakers comes L. Ron Hubbard's voice, deep and professorial. It is a tape called "Some Aspects of Help, Part I," a basic lecture in Scientology that Hubbard recorded nearly 10 years ago.

No one in the intensely respectful Los Angeles audience of 500—some of whom paid as much as $16 to get in—thought it odd to be sitting there listening to the disembodied voice. Among believers, Scientology and its Founder are beyond frivolous question: Scientology is the Truth, it is the path to "a civilization without insanity, without criminals and without war . . ." and "for the first time in all ages there *is* something that . . . delivers the answers to the eternal questions and delivers immortality as well."

So much of a credo might be regarded as harmless—practically indistinguishable from any number of minority schemes for the improvement of Man. But Scientology is scary—because of its size and growth, and because of the potentially disastrous techniques it so casually makes use of. To attain the Truth, a Scientologist surrenders himself to "auditing," a crude form of psychoanalysis. In the best medical circumstances this is a delicate procedure, but in Scientology it is undertaken by an "auditor" who is simply another Scientologist in training, who uses an "E-meter," which resembles a lie detector. A government report, made to the parliament of the state of Victoria in Australia three years ago, called Scientology "the world's largest organization of unqualified persons engaged in the practice of dangerous techniques which masquerade as mental therapy." As author Alan Levy found out by personal experience *(pages 100B-114)*, the auditing experience can be shattering.

How many souls have become hooked on Scientology is impossible to say precisely. Worldwide membership —England, South Africa, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, France, Germany, Japan and the U.S.—is probably

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between two and three million, in the U.S. offices in Washington, New York, Los Angeles and seven other cities, the figure may now be more than several hundred thousand. What is astonishing—and frightening—is the rate of growth in the U.S.: membership has probably tripled or quadrupled in the past three years.

Recruits to Scientology are most often young, intelligent and idealistic. They become fanatics on the subject, impervious to argument, quick to cut themselves off from doubters. Many young people have been instructed by their Scientology organizations ("orgs," they are called) to "disconnect" from their families. "Disconnect" means exactly that: sever all relations. Such estrangements can be deep and lasting, leaving heartsick parents no longer able to speak rationally with their children.

Scientology is expensive. To reach the first meaningful stage costs the beginner $450 in tuition. To become an Operating Thetan, Class VIII—the highest current classification—can raise the ante out thanks to tuition, equipment, board and lodging at Scientology centers during advanced training) to as much as $15,000. The high costs have the effect of turning many young Scientologists into permanent parts of the apparatus. To finance their own advanced studies they take low-paying jobs within the org—and in the end find themselves alienated from the outside of Scientology.

Scientology is nominally a religion, and the figure of Hubbard has taken on religious implications. The Nebraska-born author of the 1950 best-seller Dianetics: the Modern Science of Mental Health is now adored and remote. The literature hints at persecution in 1963 agents of the Food and Drug Administration raided Scientology's Washington headquarters and seized a number of Dianetics. Scientologists still speak of the raid on the "church." Scientology has been banned from the state of Victoria in Australia. In England, where Hubbard established the world headquarters of Scientology at Saint Hill, the government has looked with increasing disfavor on Scientology. Asserting that Scientology is "socially harmful," the government recently barred from entry a number of would-be participants in a world Scientology congress. Hubbard himself departed from England in the summer of 1966 and now lives on a 320-foot converted passenger ferry called the *Royal Scot Man*, cruising mostly between ports in the Mediterranean. There, although he claims to have given up his official ties with Saint Hill, he continues to train and send out super-Scientologists to all parts of the world. ■

Scientology's world headquarters are at Saint Hill (above), a manor house in Sussex, England. But founder L. Ron Hubbard is no longer seen there. His base now is the 320-foot onetime passenger ferry Royal Scot Man, on which he and his oldest daughter Diana, 15, affect nautical gear. From one of the upper decks he looks down on the aide of his young Scientologists.

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An exploring writer becomes personally involved

'A TRUE-LIFE NIGHTMARE'

by ALAN LEVY

A student's motel likens Scientology CLEAR to Superman

CLEAR is the name of a button on an adding machine. When you push it, all hidden answers clear and the machine can be used for a proper computation.

"So long as the button is *not* pressed, the machine adds all old answers to all new efforts to compute and wrong answers result."

This message, blown up in a wall-mounted advertising display case at a busy mid-Manhattan subway exit, was a pitch for Scientology—a curious cult about which my store of information was very limited: *People I knew seemed to know people who were taking it up. Scientology had overtones of psychiatry. It promised to make a better person of you. And, in some way, it involved a device that worked like a lie detector.* That was all I knew. I read on—and, as I did, the language of the ad seemed to take an odd and threatening spin:

"People who have old fixed answers reacting when they try to think get wrong answers to their current problems. Such old answers are not cleared. Rollo is still solving the tantrums of his mother who has been dead for years. Marybelle is still running away from the tramp who attacked her when she was 10 years old. So Rollo stays home as the solution to the women of the world. And Marybelle runs madly about as a solution to all the uncouth men she sees. Their friends think they're a bit odd. Their doctors prescribe pills. And we clear the answers which won't let them live."

I began to wonder how, and thus, without the faintest idea of what I was getting into, I embarked upon an adventure in mind-bending that took me from a ballroom in Manhattan to a 100-year-old brownstone off Fitzroy Square in London to a 30-room Georgian manor house in Sussex that could have passed for SMERSH headquarters. The last was, actually, the home of a Nebraska-born prophet named L. Ron Hubbard, who in the 1950s invented a best-selling, but soon discredited, "science" of mental health called Dianetics and who then resurfaced with the far more sinister "religion" he calls Scientology.

I have Hubbard to thank for a true-life nightmare that gnawed at my family relationships and saddled me with a burden of guilt I've not yet been able to shed. Scientology does indeed use a machine similar to a lie detector, and the most menacing moments on my odyssey toward CLEAR had come when—inextricably plugged into the *electroencephaloneurometimograph*, or *"Hubbard Mark V E-meter"* for short—I explored some nooks and crannies of my own psyche that I wish to God had never been unearthed.

I did not confront the electronic heart of Scientology—the E-meter—until I had invested three evenings listening to introductory lectures. The Church of Scientology of New York occupied the Grand Ballroom of the Martinique, a tackily renovated hotel near the new Madison Square Garden. Ablaze with light and encircled by mirrors, this ballroom-church had an aura of crystal clarity. So did the giant studio portraits of Scientology's founder—a stern but fatherly type with steely eyes and an outsized chronometer on his wrist—that lined the walls and were for sale at $5.50 apiece. The dance floor had been cut up into offices, cubicles, displays, bulletin boards, bookstore, a stand selling picture postcards of Saint Hill Manor in Sussex, and reception desks—all staffed round-the-clock by a couple of dozen "Pre-CLEARs" working shifts to pay their own fees for being "audited," as Scientology processing is called.

Every one of these people—male and female, mostly young, and a few middle-aged—had a peculiar smile that was sublimely sincere, but seemed to exist independently of the face it was affixed to. They

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Scientology's first CLEAR, John McMaster, a South African, became No. 1 in 1966. Its youngest CLEAR, Jill Goodman, an English girl of 10, made the grade last summer.

At Saint Hill, an auditing subject holds two cans attached by wires to the E-meter. Her responses to questions make the needle jump and reveal her inner tensions.

The first audit gave me much more than I bargained for

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didn't walk amidst the hotel's potted palms, they floated. Across their eyes hung a beatific film that I wanted to snap my fingers at. Only now and then, when they spoke about Scientology, could I perceive a flashing silver glint behind the film—an evangelical commitment, perhaps. Otherwise, the personal data I offered—that I lived in Greenwich Village; that I had a wife and two kids; that I worked in "publicity" (a half-truth which would offend only a journalism professor)—all evoked ethereal acknowledgements of "Perfect!" or "Beautiful!"

This same enviable inner serenity bloomed unblushingly from one of my introductory lecturers, a soft-spoken and radiantly pretty young woman in her late 20s named Mishka O'Connor. Her style was personal and conversational:

"I'm married to a stained-glass artist who just went CLEAR at Saint Hill. He's been home a month now and he's making four times as much money as he used to—and not working as hard." Mishka had gone to Saint Hill with her husband. "But I had to come home before I could finish my processing. My husband's trying to build up his business so I can go back for CLEAR. Then he'll sell the business so we can both go into Scientology professionally. And I'm sure we will, because it's amazing how resourceful you become . . . My husband knows exactly who and what he is. He can be emotionally stable or volatile as he so chooses!" Mishka took a deep breath and concluded fervently: "He's beautiful!"

The lectures—which immersed me in Scientology's basic tenets and jargon, while spelling out the eight distinct levels one must pass on the route to CLEAR—were free. The sample "audit" with an E-meter cost me $5. It lasted two hours and gave me much more than I had bargained for.

The E-meter was an unimposingly compact box resting on a plain table in the middle of a bare, windowless cubicle behind the ballroom. The machine, apparently battery-powered, was equipped with a gauge and a moving needle, several control knobs and wires leading to two unadorned tins.

"Why, they look like beer cans!" I exclaimed to my "auditor," a sallow middle-aged man with features as austere as his auditing cell.

"As a matter of fact," he said, suddenly twinkling, "they were V-8 juice cans."

"And it works like a lie detector?" I said dubiously.

"Well, we call it a truth detector."

I found his answers modestly disarming. Now he had me remove my watch and wedding ring to "prevent interference by outside metals." When I gripped the cans and sat facing him, he turned the box so that only he could see the needle.

"I'm going to ask you each question twice," he said. "Once just to ascertain that you understand it. . . . Then, when we're both sure you do, I'll ask it again. This time, you can answer or you don't have to. The E-meter will show how you react."

Did I have a criminal record? Was I addicted to drugs? Had I, as instructed, abstained from drugs and drink for the past 24 hours? "Hmmm. The needle shows a 'read' on that."

Well, I was about to take an aspirin last night—but then I remembered."

"Good. Let me ask the question again. . . . Now you're clean."

Did I have a good night's sleep? How did I evaluate my relationship with my wife?

What would I like from Scientology?

I hadn't expected such a question. "To work harder, work better, do better work, do different work—to write plays—to be more relaxed, and a better husband and father."

"Good. Now what would Scientology have to do to convince you it worked?"

To my own surprise, I snapped back: "I'd have to write a successful play within a year."

"Thank you," he said. "But I still get some 'charge' on that. Is there something more you want to say about this question?"

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A test query about 'suppressive persons' made the needle jump

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"Yes," I confessed. "I'm starting to feel terribly vulnerable. It's as if I've just been asked what price I'd take for selling my soul to the devil." My auditor nodded sagely and unsmilingly but said nothing, so I rambled on: "Besides, my answer was unfair to Scientology. I mean, none of you is David Merrick."

"O.K. . . . Now it shows you're clean."

A "read" on "Do you have too much of anything?" finally disappeared after I admitted to "happiness I may be tampering with here."

And then: "Are you connected with a suppressive person?"

My auditor winced. "The needle almost went off the machine," he announced. Then he produced a battered copy of the 36-page *Scientology Abridged Dictionary*, put it in front of me and asked: "Do you know what 'suppressive' means?"

As I had guessed, a suppressive person was someone out to destroy or damage Scientology. Because I knew that Scientology had a reputation for secretiveness, I had not mentioned that I planned to write an article about my experiences. While my auditor reread the definition to me, the names of my agent and the editor with whom I had discussed the possibility of the story irresistibly paraded up and down in my head. Eventually my auditor said: "Suppose you pick up the cans and tell me who you've been thinking of."

Repressing the two names in a truth-detector interrogation was an awesome struggle. Simultaneously I had an equally strong impulse to shout my own name—denouncing myself as a suppressive infiltrator. With schizoid detachment, I wondered which of the three names would cross my lips first.

To my absolute astonishment, the name I spoke was my wife's. Well, yes, we had bickered over the time I was spending on Scientology. Improvising desperately, I explained that my wife wasn't really suppressive so much as concerned. When I was all talked out, my auditor put the "suppressive person" question to me again. This time the E-meter said I was "clean."

Nevertheless, he stood up. "You'll have to excuse me," he said. "Whenever we've had any kind of 'read' on questions like this, we have to call in the Examiner-in-Charge." In less than a minute a thick-set girl in black sweater and skirt, with thick dark hair and a trace of mustache, stamped into the cubicle. She tested me on the E-meter with the same question.

"Why do I get a little 'read' on it still?" she asked.

"Maybe," I replied, "because I'm shook up by having my auditor yanked away from me like this."

"We can't be too careful," she explained without warmth.

The next time around, I was "clean" with her, too, but I still didn't get my auditor back. I was sent to Reception to stew for 15 minutes and then go before the Ethics Officer, who turned out to be an effete young man decked out in a blue turtleneck sweater and Ben Franklin glasses. His attack was different but also frightening. He had a printed checklist of 20 "potentially suppressive acts" that my wife might have committed: Was she opening or withholding my mail? Garbling phone messages? Listening in on phone calls? Denigrating my ambitions?

With tin cans in hand, I was able to acquit or excuse her on all counts. The Ethics Officer pronounced my case "not serious—just a minor break in what we call the Affinity-Reality-Communication Triangle."

The "A-R-C Triangle" is an important bit of Scientological jargon. It means, approximately, that to Communicate successfully with someone you must feel some Affinity for him and you both must be talking about the same thing—Reality. I knew exactly where the break had come but the Ethics Officer, happily, didn't. With one last "suppressive person" check on the E-meter, he returned me to auditing.

The rest of the session was anticlimactic. Even probing questions didn't bother me. While waiting for the Ethics Officer, I had worked out a way to beat the E-meter when I needed to.

The needle seemed to record emotional stress and, since I am good with memory tricks and concentration games, I drilled my mind to focus on the Esther Williams-Kathryn Grayson-Jose Iturbi-Jimmy Durante-Lauritz Melchior musical films of my boyhood as soon as a tough question hit in. I was able to drift dreamily past the roughest shoals on a cloud

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Was I serious about going on toward CLEAR? I said I was

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of M-G-M escapism—giving away only as much as I wanted to give.

"That's it," said my auditor. "How do you feel?"

"Impressed," I said, quite honestly.

"Good. Now don't be alarmed, but I'm going to call in the Examiner one last time. She has to make sure you're ready to go back to the outside world."

The frightening girl in black asked just one question: "What gains do you feel you've made from this session?"

"I know a bit more about myself," I said, which was true but a considerable understatement.

The question put to me by the Registrar when the Examiner had gone was blunt enough: Did I plan to go on and make a real start toward CLEAR? By this time I had the distinct impression that pressing deeper into Scientology would be less than a joy-ride. Nevertheless, I said that I thought I would, and the Registrar reminded me that auditing "through Grade IV" was available right at New York headquarters. It would cost $650.

I told him that my plans were to be in London for the summer. "Perfect!" he said without missing a beat. "We can refer you to the London Org and take a commission. Their fees won't be much different from ours and you'll only be an hour away from Saint Hill, which is like the center of the universe. You can go right on out there after your Grade IV release."

In the weeks before leaving for England, I learned a few things about Lafayette Ronald Hubbard and where Scientology had come from. Elron (as his flock speaks of him) was born in 1911 in Tilden, Nebraska, the son of a U.S. Navy commander, and, at 14, while on a tour of the Far East with his father, "studied . . . with lama priests." This turned out to be a distinct high point in Elron's education. He never graduated from college—although he has on occasion claimed a degree. During the '30s, he traveled in Central America and made a career for himself as a prolific ("15 million published words") and popular writer of science fiction (*Final Blackout*), westerns (*Buckskin Brigades*), and screenplays for a 15-episode serial. In World War II, he served as a U.S. Navy officer. Elron claims today that he and his experiences formed the basis for the postwar novel, play and movie *Mister Roberts*.

Meanwhile, from his boyhood onward, Hubbard had been formulating a set of at least 200 "self-evident truths. . . . I saw miracles in India and China done by holy men, but long association with them convinced me that they did not know entirely how they did it. I set out to find out from nuclear philosophy."

This distillation of applied wisdom first emerged in 1950 as a 435-page book called *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*. Introduced first in *Astounding Science Fiction* magazine, Dianetics was hailed by Hubbard himself as "a milestone for Man comparable to his discovery of fire and superior to his invention of the wheel and the arch." Sloppily but colorfully written, and propelled mainly by word of mouth, *Dianetics* sold 100,000 copies in the first three months and more than 1.5 million to date. It went right to the top of the best-seller charts. With 500,000 believers at its zenith, Dianetics became —for a time—a household word. It was, in effect, a jiffy mind-straightening scheme for the do-it-yourselfer to practice in his own parlor.

"The basic discovery of Dianetics," one of my introductory lecturers explained, "was the *Engram*, a word Hubbard borrowed from biology, where an Engram is the permanent impression left on protoplasm as the result of a stimulus. But to the Scientologist an Engram is a picture image that is imprinted on a cell—like a microgroove on a record—by an experience involving partial unconsciousness and some pain. It's an area Freud explored but dropped when he went on to other things. Fortunately for us, Elron Hubbard picked it up and went on with it."

Engrams beset man right from the beginning. "Birth is a pretty aberrative affair," Elron wrote in *Dianetics*. By taking one client back to birth through drug hypnosis, he was able to diagnose that "his asthma had been caused by the doctor's enthusiasm in yanking him off the table just when he was fighting for his first breath." Engrams can be incurred prenatally: "Mama sneezes, baby gets knocked unconscious. . . . Papa becomes passionate and baby has the sensation of being put in a running washing machine. Mama gets hysterical, baby gets an

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The goal, they explained, was to eliminate every Engram

Engram. Papa hits Mama, baby gets an Engram. . . ." And, finally, Hubbard's "Non-Germ Theory of Disease" holds that many of man's ills are Engramic, including arthritis, dermatitis, allergies, asthma, some coronary difficulties, eye trouble, bursitis, ulcers, sinusitis, migraine headaches, and even tuberculosis and cancer, as well as the common cold. The human being, the lecturer had explained, actually has two minds: the Analytical, which is like a perfect computer, and the Reactive, which takes care of situations like dodging an approaching taxi. As a result of all stimuli it receives, the Reactive mind is one mass of Engrams, feeding the otherwise perfect Analytical mind incorrect data. The idea is to erase—to CLEAR—these Engrams. In Dianetics, the process took too long. So, in the lecturer's words, "Elron Hubbard asked himself: Why don't we use a lie detector to find out what really happens behind all these nangups and inhibitions? He experimented with the idea, refined it—and so today we have the E-meter."

The evolution from Dianetics to Scientology coincided with some messy upheavals in Hubbard's personal life. Prominent psychiatrists, including the late Dr. William Menninger, denounced Dianetic Auditing as potentially dangerous. The Manhattan endocrinologist who wrote the laudatory foreword to *Dianetics* broke with Hubbard, charging that Hubbard was heading toward "absolutism and authoritarianism" while some of his patients were going mad. And Hubbard—after a messy court case that involved the abduction of his own child—shed his second wife (who during divorce procedures termed him "hopelessly insane") in 1951 and later married Mary Sue Whipp of the Wichita Dianetics Foundation. He took Mary Sue first to Phoenix and then to England, where she bore him the first of four children. They settled in baronial splendor at Saint Hill, the 57-acre estate Elron acquired from the Maharajah of Jaipur.

Hubbard left behind him, in the U.S., Scientology centers in 10 cities. By designating his theory as a religion—a move he himself has termed "an historic breakthrough into the realm of the Human Spirit"—Hubbard freed Scientology from a number of legal strictures. Regulations covering what may be said or done in the name of religion are considerably looser than those covering science or medicine.

"It took Elron Hubbard 15 years to find the first person who could go CLEAR," the lecturer had said. "In February 1966 at Saint Hill, the first CLEAR was born: a South African medical student named John McMaster. Then all the technology fell into place, and the processing has now been worked out. They're turning out 15 or 20 CLEARs a week at Saint Hill.

"Now we can help a person free himself from his Engrams and the other things that are keeping him from being an optimum human being. It takes maybe 60 hours of auditing plus a course in Dianetic training. The road to CLEAR is very fast now."

In the jet 40,000 feet over the North Atlantic, I wrote in my notebook: "Hubbard and disciples clearly believe in what he says." Then I added: "P.S.—so do all dedicated salesmen."

The Hubbard Scientology Organization (Org) in London occupied a venerable four-story building on Fitzroy Street, just around the corner from Britain's tallest skyscraper, the new 40-story Post Office Tower. After checking in and paying my fees (in advance, naturally), I met my auditor, David Dunlop was a taciturn Scotsman in his late 20s who, the Registrar had confided to me, "works very well with Americans." He wore the same neat gray suit every day throughout my processing. The schedule he proposed to get me up to Grade IV—a kind of intermediate plateau beyond which lay three further levels before CLEAR—was definitely businesslike: we would start at 9 every weekday morning, take an hour out for lunch and go on until 5 p.m.

"Now we can get cracking," David said when I showed him my bursar's receipt. "Cracking" was an apt word; in a matter of minutes, we were probing a fragile item of my mental luggage that I thought I'd left behind.

We began with what David called "Straight-Wire Release"—an exercise designed to strengthen my memory and "mend past breaks in the Affinity-Reality-Communication Triangle." This exercise and the one after it, I was surprised to learn, both rated below the Zero Grade. Then, if I could handle Zero—which David said would bring my reactive mind up

CONTINUED

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The auditor began to reach deep and find hidden places

CONTINUED

to snuff—we could try for Grade 1.

I gripped the cans and David monitored his E-meter while he posed the same three problems over and over.

"Recall a communication," said David.

"Just before I boarded my plane, I phoned my wife from the airport," I responded, going on to tell him the whole trivial farewell in detail.

"Good. Now recall something real."

I described the ticky-tacky interior of my transatlantic jet.

"Okay. Recall an emotion."

My father had died four months earlier. The button pushed by the word "emotion" triggered a description of my surprisingly passive reaction to his death.

"Fine. Now recall a communication."

I described the letter that had reached me, eight months before, with the fatal diagnosis.

"Okay. Recall something real."

"Cancer."

"Now recall an emotion," said David. He was making notes on a pad mounted to a clipboard.

"The letter came just as we were pulling out of a trailer camp in Kentucky. We'd been on vacation. I remember thinking that, if we'd only left a few minutes earlier, I wouldn't have gotten the letter and he wouldn't have cancer. Which is silly, of course."

"Good. Now recall a communication."

"A book called *The American Way of Death*."

"Okay. Recall something real."

"My awareness, even before the diagnosis, that my father's end was near. I'd bought the book three years earlier, but hadn't read it. And yet I took it along and read it on that particular vacation. I must have been preparing . . ."

Now I was in deep. I had to work at propelling my train of thought toward "safer" problems. Over several dozen go-rounds, I went from my relations with my father in his lifetime . . . to the sterility of living one's life to achieve objectives set by others . . . to three drafts of my first adult venture into playwriting.

Recall a *communication*: "A trusted adviser's opinion that it needs at least two more drafts before I can show it to David Merrick. But there's another play I want to start writing. Yet, if I don't stick to what I'm doing, one thing at a time, I'll just be creating a trunkful of uncompleted plays."

Recall something real: "Well the next play has been coming so clear in my mind for the past three months that it's much more real than the play I've written three times." At this point, I was so wrought-up that David had to remind me to keep both hands on the tin cans.

Recall an *emotion*: "Anticipation!" I was shouting and I could feel a glow begin to envelope me. "Do you know, David, that anticipating something can be much more exciting and rewarding than the smooth, logical process of everything going as it should go?"

David's answer was: "Very good. You can put down the cans now." He told me, as I already suspected, that I had just achieved Straight-Wire Release.

"You mean," I said knowledgeably, "my needle is still."

"Oh, no. When the needle is still, it just means you're clean on a particular question that I'm asking. But when the needle is floating freely and easily, instead of jumping, it means that you've achieved release on the whole subject."

On my next sub-Zero level, "Secondary Release," the repetitive questions were *Recall a loss* and *Recall a misemotion*. Almost instantly, I was enmeshed once again in the loss of my father and the alarming lack of grief I seemed to feel. I found myself brooding into the E-meter about why my own father's death didn't seem to affect me as much as those of President Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe. I started out with some glib pop sociology about our mobile age with its rapid dissolution of family bonds and how people we see on the screen are more real to us than our own kin. But the answer lay closer to home and deeper within. I wound up describing, with appalling accuracy that still makes me squirm, the gradual filminess that aging casts over a man.

My father was 79 when he drew his last breath. But it struck me with hammer force that I had actually been watching him die from at least the age of 65 onward.

As soon as I said this, David informed me that I had now been released from "moments of loss and misemotion."

I felt good then—very good—in my new self-knowledge. Later would come the weight of guilt.

"Communications Release" (Grade Zero) was a variation of

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After each session it was like awaking from a dream

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the word-association games I used to like to play at parties. The two alternating queries were "*What are you willing to tell me about? What are you willing to tell me about it?*" I caromed from sex to words to drama to movies to expatriation to deadlines to friendship to danger and almost a hundred other subjects before I finally found myself explaining and justifying a complicated future plan that wouldn't be of interest to anyone outside my immediate family—except perhaps someone probing me for vulnerability. The psychiatrist I consulted months afterward told me that "free association and repetition are two quick ways to induce regression in a patient. He starts to lose normal ego control."

After each Release I had to go through an elaborate bureaucratic minuet. The first step was always Tech Services, where whoever was on duty would interview me and, whenever I seemed unresponsive, peer at me with great concern and ask if I was all right.

If a day's auditing ended in midgrade, David wouldn't let me go out on the street without first focusing my attention on each of five or six objects (the doorknob, for example) in the otherwise barren auditing room. It felt like being awakened from a dream.

Grade I was concerned with "*problems.*" David would ask me, "What is the *problem?*" and, when I'd named it, "What *solutions* have you?" We started out with *money* and wound up—not long after the E-meter had revealed some bypassed charge on the problem of *comeuppance*—by uncovering the notion of *suicide* which, I discovered, lurked in the back of my mind as an ultimate solution to the insoluble. The more I talked about it, the more I knew I could never do it. *Presto! Problems Release!*

I came away relieved, but I wondered then what kind of hornet's nest a less sensitive auditor might stir up in the mind of a person with different hangups. I suspected that, however well-intentioned they might be, Scientology's auditors were simply people who had studied Scientology, were devoted to the subject and had themselves attained one or more levels toward CLEAR. Beyond that, I doubted they had special qualifications to be fooling around in a comparative stranger's psyche.

Grade II involved Overts ("harmful or contrasurvival acts") and Withholds ("undisclosed contrasurvival acts") and was called the "Relief Release." David would repeat the same two questions, "*What have you done?*" and "*What haven't you said?*" I spilled out incident after incident until I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that what I'd done was to "make life—every aspect of it, even every trivial conversation—a constant battle, a kind of Indian handwrestle to get the better of someone. It's all hit-or-flop, success-or-failure, make-or-break with me. . . . David, I think I may have achieved a Release here!"

"You have," said David.

Grade III, or "Freedom Release," required me to recall a past break with someone in the Affinity-Reality-Communication Triangle. In retrospect, it determined my future as a Scientologist. Straining to keep my traumas legitimate, I suddenly jarred open a Pandora's box within me.

Somehow, I was reliving an argument from early in my marriage. I had been blathering about how well I was doing and how great I was, and my wife had made a face. I shot back then almost jokingly: "Don't you love me any more?"

"I *love* you," she had replied, choosing her words carefully, "but I'm not sure that I *like* you at this very moment." Her words had for a brief time devastated me.

David wanted to know *when* this had happened.

I thought for a moment and said: "In 1958. We were living in Louisville and had just come back from a winter trip to New Orleans, so I'd say early 1958. And it was Sunday morning—I remember that distinctly."

"Good. Let's get a fix on the date. Was it January? February?"

"March, I'd think."

"It was March," said David, consulting the E-meter. "Now the date? First to 10th? Eleventh to 20th? I've got a read on 11th to 20th."

"Wouldn't it be easier," I said, "to consult a 1958 calendar? There are only four or five Sundays in March."

"There's no need for that. And keep your hands on the E-meter," David said sharply. "The E-meter will find out for us. Was it the 11th to 15th? Sixteenth? Seventeenth? Eighteenth? Nineteenth? Twentieth? That's funny, I get

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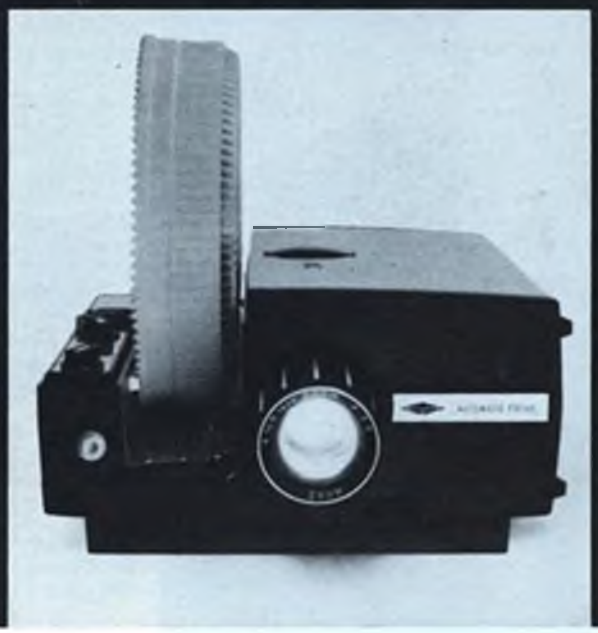

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The E-meter said March 18, but something was very wrong

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reads on the 15th, the 17th and the 18th."

"I think I know," I said. "When you said '15th' the Ides of March went through my head. And the 17th is St. Patrick's Day, which anybody who grew up in New York remembers. But I don't know about the 18th."

"Then it's probably the 18th," said David.

We rechecked March 15th to 20th on the E-meter. This time the only "read" was on the 18th.

"Before we go on," I said, "can't we get a calendar and check whether March 18, 1958 was a Sunday?"

"No," said David. "This is the session. And don't let go of the cans!"

With that, he rummaged in a drawer until he found a 23-part checklist which took me over my 1958 domestic spat. I was too disturbed by the fresh memory of the incident and David's harshness even to answer Yes or No to most of the items. But David reported that the omniscient E-meter had shown the "greatest read" on "Was a past refusal of reality restimulated?"

"Of course it was," I said fiercely. "The Reality being rejected was me!"

This was the Release, but by now my hands were clenched around the E-meter cans and David had to remind me to let go.

"Are you all right," he asked, "or have we overrun your Freedom Release?"

"Ability Release," my farewell to auditing in London, seemed tame by comparison—even though it began with the memory of stepping on a dancing partner's toes and ended still more violently with me crawling beneath live machine-gun fire at Fort Dix. In both instances, I was made aware that my clumsiness, or "wrong computations," had hurt or endangered others—particularly a sergeant who had crawled out to hurry me along the infiltration course.

In fact, even while the London Registrar was packeting my bulging folder for my transfer to Saint Hill —the only place in the world where one could take the final levels to CLEAR—I realized that, during the whole process, I had been made to feel achingly ashamed of myself—for my remote flirtation with suicide; for the battle I'd made out of life; for walking into a swing at the age of 4; and, above all, for standing by, feeling no pain and offering no help, during the first dozen years I watched my father age and die.

Here, there was guilt within guilt: I worried that the next time I saw my mother, I might give her an inkling of this terrible truth I'd unearthed. A tug of war was going on in my mind. One pull seemed to say: "Listen! Everybody gets old. He spent eight *months* dying, not 14 years. There wasn't a thing you could do that you didn't do. And you didn't grieve because it was a merciful end and you had eight months' warning." The other, slightly stronger, pull seemed to be saying: "Only Scientology can save you—can relieve your guilt!" My journalistic involvement had led me this far—on an inbound voyage of self discovery that was starting to tear me apart.

Something else was happening to me while I killed time in London until my appointment at Saint Hill: I, who averaged three or four minor headaches a year, was having three or four blinding headaches a day. They recurred whenever I tried to ponder the Sunday, March 18, 1958 quarrel with my wife. It was as if there were something basic either in the incident itself or in the uncovering of it that my Reactive Mind didn't want my Analytical Mind to find out. Struggling in vain to apply the standard journalistic questions—*Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?* —to the revelations of Sunday, March 18, 1958, I simply could not get beyond *when?* Invariably, a headache would intercept and abort my span of attention.

You can amass all the evidence in the world to convince a man that a drug or a practice or a doctrine or a cigarette is bad for him, but when he's halfway hooked by it he has to find out for himself. This was my case as I rode the British Railways from London 30 miles to East Grinstead and took a cab to Saint Hill Manor. I craved release from Scientology and the blinding headaches my new self-knowledge had brought me. And yet I needed to know more about the significance of the events of Sunday, March 18, 1958. I suspected that both could be found only at Saint Hill.

My cab turned off the main road onto a country lane that climbed through rolling hillsides speckled with scooters and kiddie cars, sandboxes and swings, and a

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At Saint Hill, the holy place, an impulse led to revelation

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dozen children feeding a donkey. It was all sunny, open and innocent—until an army of trees loomed up to flank and darken the road. As we neared the sprawling, gloomy-looking manor house, the road ended and my driver said: "This is as far as I can take you. Reception's in the first shed." The mansion was marked: "OFF LIMITS."

My release from Scientology came that morning and that afternoon in a series of revelatory incidents.

The Registrar had my papers all ready for me to sign. But my contract for Grades V through VII called upon me to pay not the $390 New York and London had given me to understand—but $3,150! "Plus living expenses," added the Cashier, whom the Registrar had summoned in the expectation of having my signature witnessed. "The information you say you were given in London and New York is wrong. These are our rates, payable in advance. We can't have credit, can we?" And he handed me a rate card.

It was outrageous. I told him that I'd have to go back to London and maybe to New York to swing it. "Meanwhile, so my trip out here won't be a total waste, may I wander about?" Armed with the horse-headed pin I had been given for reaching Grade IV and a map showing what was on and off limits, I explored Saint Hill for the rest of that balmy day. The grounds were aswarm with butterflies, grasshoppers and people. At small folding tables behind the manor house and around the wishing well, perhaps 60 people were auditing some 60 others, E-meters between them. Scores more could be seen auditing inside various bungalows.

Toward noon, I bought a sandwich and a soda from vending machines and picnicked on the grass with what seemed like hundreds of my fellow Scientologists. A fat lady who'd packed her own hero sandwich wore a badge reading: "I AM IN POWER PROCESSES (Grade V). PLEASE DO NOT ASK ME QUESTIONS, AUDIT ME, OR DISCUSS MY CASE WITH ME." And, shortly after 12, a bright-eyed young girl came out of an auditing shack and plunked herself down amidst benign smiles.

"Hi, Fran!" several picnickers greeted her.

"I just went CLEAR," she said softly.

All the boys and girls within earshot fell over her, cheered her, pummeled her and kissed her. Others came running over to do the same. A circle formed. There was a flurry of eager questioning, which Fran answered calmly and self-confidently in a slight Bronx accent. Then the conversation died down. Fran's friends smiled at her. She smiled back. Somebody new would pass by. Fran would murmur, "I went CLEAR!" The passers-by would maul her, congratulate her, and either move on or join the circle. The smiles would come on again.

Finally, after a long, uneventful silence, Fran turned to one of the boys in the circle. With a desperate pounce, she grabbed his lapels and implored him: "So what's new?"

The emptiness of her going CLEAR touched me. I felt like answering her question with another: "So who wants it?"

Right after lunch, a little girl's resemblance to my 3-year-old daughter caught my eye. She was 5, or perhaps 6, and she wore a red dress and white stockings—her Sunday best. She was very, very tense. So was her mother—a young woman in slacks who sounded like an Australian.

"Now when you go before the Examiner," the mother was saying, "I want you to do just what we did at home this morning. When he asks if you feel you've been Released, you say 'yes' just like we did at home."

The child gave a nod, which seemed to jolt her whole rigid little frame. As she and her mother entered an auditing shack, a rate chart I'd seen—"Junior Dianetics: $10; Children's Cram Course: $5.60"—was shockingly fleshed out for me. In less than two minutes they came out. Now the mother's stride was brisk and proud. Her daughter was skipping. She had pleased her mother and now she could go play—until tomorrow, at least.

Depressed, I retreated to the inevitable Scientology bookstore, where a skinny, beady-eyed clerk remarked upon the beautiful weather: "There hasn't been a spell like this since around the time John McMaster went CLEAR. It's been this way since Sunday. . . ."

Her words triggered another of my blinding headaches and, in the moment I wondered why, the battle between my Reactive Mind and my Analytical Mind was at last joined.

"Look!" I said, almost lunging at the poor clerk. "Do you have any kind of almanac or perpetual calendar here?"

"No," she said. "Nothing like that."

"Can you call me a cab?" I said.

"The switchboard can. If you'll give me fourpence, I'll see that they place the call."

The only calendar in the bookstore was for 1967—when March 18 fell on a Saturday. In the 15 minutes while I waited for the cab, one of my minds tried to calculate backward to March 18, 1958—a trick I can ordinarily perform in two or three minutes—while the other seemed to be crying: "Stop!" By the time I'd paid the driver and dashed into the W. H. Smith & Sons bookstore of East Grinstead, I had not for the life of me been able to get back past 1960.

Smith's had an almanac. It took me less than a minute to find what had been gnawing at me about March 18, 1958. It was not guilt or my wife's love for me. It was simply that in 1958, March 18 had fallen on a Tuesday, not a Sunday.

It seems pathetic to me still, and terribly precarious, that my failure to perform so simple a journalistic chore—under other circumstances I would have automatically looked up the date—could have kept me half tied to Scientology, the deep-probing auditing sessions and the damned E-meter. It is still difficult for me to admit to myself how deeply those months affected me. A psychiatrist I consulted later in an effort to find out what had happened to me said: "You haven't been brainwashed or you wouldn't be here talking to me. But they did a remarkable job of indoctrinating you and I hope you'll get your equilibrium back."

I am sure that among the millions of words Elron has written, there are some to convince me that the Engram I unlocked in that one auditing session *did* happen on a Tuesday—in another life—or that March 18 *did* fall on a Sunday when I was in the womb. But, thankfully, it no longer matters.

At Saint Hill, an intense young boy perseveres to reach CLEAR